

CHURCH-AUTHORITY

VINDICATED,

IN A

SERMON

PREACH'D AT

PUTNEY, May 5, 1719.

At a Visitation of the *Peculiars*  
of the most Reverend the Lord Archbishop of  
CANTERBURY, before the Right Worshipful  
Dr. *Bettesworth*, Dean of the Arches, and Com-  
missary of those *Peculiars*.

*K* By FR. HARE, D. D. Rector of *Barnes*,  
and Chaplain in Ordinary to His Majesty.

*The Fifth Edition Corrected.*

To which is Added,  
A POSTSCRIPT, Occasioned by the Right Re-  
verend the Ld. Bishop of *Bangor's* Answer.

L O N D O N:

Printed, and Sold by J. ROBERTS, near the  
*Oxford-Arms* in *Warwick-Lane*. 1726.

GRANT  
JAN 1864  
NEW YORK





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T H E  
P R E F A C E.

**T**<sup>O</sup> meddle in a Controversy that has been so long on Foot, and after so many able Pens, wants an Excuse so much, that I cannot let this Sermon go A-broad without assuring the Reader, that it is very much against my own Inclination, and purely in Compliance with the Importunity of those that heard it, who desired it might be Printed, in a Manner not to be denied.

They who consider this as a Visitation-Sermon, and know the Author, will not wonder either at the Choice of the Subject, or the Side I have taken in it : For though I shall ever be an Enemy to Persecution, and cannot think it equitable in the Governours of the Church to take the utmost Advantage of severe Laws against innocent well-meaning People, while they continue such ; much less to call in the secular Arm, to oppress and crush under its Weight vertuous and learned Men, for the Mistakes their disintereed Pursuits of Truth and Knowledge may happen to lead them into ; though I am very free to own my self to be in these Sentiments, in which I would hope I have the Sense of all wise and good Men with me ; yet I can by no Means come into the Notions of those Gentlemen, who declare against all Authority in the Church, and all Establishments of Religion by the State, which they would make the World believe are utterly inconsistent with right Reason, just Liberty and true Religion, contrary to the Will of Christ, and destructive of the Faith and Doctrine taught by him. But to me the Reverse of all this seems to be the Truth ; That Authority and Government, whether in Church or State, in Matters of Religion are absolutely necessary to preserve Peace and Order,

to keep Liberty from Degenerating into Licentiousness, to protect the Church and the Truths taught in it from its Enemies of all Kinds, whether secret or professed ; and perfectly agreeable to the Will of God, who expects and requires it at the Hands of his Vicegerents, that they should protect true Religion and be Nursing-Fathers to the Church.

To assert that Establishments in general are unrighteous and unreasonable, is, in my humble Opinion, so wild a Notion, that the more I think of it, the more difficult it is to reconcile it in any View to good Sense ; it seems not only to proceed from a total Ignorance of human Nature, and to contradict the Sense of Mankind in all Ages, but to reflect infinite Dishonour upon God himself, as the Author and Institutor of the Jewish Government : And as to our own Establishment in particular, 'tis so far from weakening the Protestant Religion, as opposed to Popery ; that 'tis, I think, evident to a Demonstration, that it is the great Support and Preservation of it ; which, unless it had the Gift of Miracles, without an Establishment could no more defend it self against the United Strength and Zeal of Popery, than a disconcerted Rabble could stand against a well disciplined Army.

But in this Discourse the Reader has my Thoughts only as to the Power and Authority of the Ministers and Governours of the Church, and that as it appears upon the Face of Scripture, without any Regard to Modern Systems ; in which, I hope, I have advanced nothing but what will be found to be well grounded ; and then it will not fail of the Approbation of competent and equitable Judges ; and for the rest I am in no Pain. But whether my Thoughts on this Subject are right or not, I cannot set them in a fuller Light than I have, and therefore shall leave them to take their Fate ; with this Satisfaction, that I have said nothing to serve a Turn, but have asserted throughout, what appeared to me to be true, whether it were necessary for the Cause I maintain or not ; which as to one Point, the Invisibilty of the Church, will be acknowledged by all who have read what the Ingenious Author of the Visible and Invisible Church has written upon that Subject ; who, in Compliance with our Adversaries, has very usefully considered the Church as an Invisible Society, and to

so good Purpose that he has quite disarmed them of all the Advantage they could hope to make of it, and shewn at large that it can do them no Service.

Those who may not like the Matter of this Discourse, will, I hope, find little in the Manner of it to offend them; for though I cannot but own my self filled with Indignation and Astonishment at the loose Principles of some Writers, the extravagant Liberties they have taken in Defence of them, their Perversion of Scripture, their Contempt of Antiquity, and their rude Treatment of our Constitution; I have suppressed those Resentments all I could, and confined my self to the Argument, that I might not offend where I cannot please; which, in all Disputes, is the first Step towards convincing those who differ from us.

I make no Excuse for the Length of this Discourse to those who did not hear it, who may read as little of it at a Time as they please; for which Reason I have taken the Liberty to make it a little longer than it was, by the Insertion of a few Lines in two or three Places, and the Addition of a few Notes, which to the less Learned I thought might be of Use.

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Hebrews, Chap. xiii. Ver. 17.

*Obey them that have the Rule over you, and submit your selves.*

**T**H E Scripture, considered as a Rule and Judge of Controversy, though appealed to by all Sides, is rarely submitted to by any with that Impartiality and Deference of Judgment that is due to it, and which they expect should be paid it by their Adversaries. They go to the Scripture not to learn from thence, what or whose Opinions are truest, but how they may best defend their own. If all Sides were not more or less guilty of this, it is impossible the Christian World, the reformed Parts of it at least, could so long continue divided upon so many Points, as we see and lament they do.

But what is more strange, this Rule has been by none less followed, or more perverted, than by those who pretend most to a strict and close Adherence to it; so close, that all other Rules and Guides, living or dead, ancient or modern, Fathers and Councils, even the primitive and earliest Writers of the Church, are not only neglected by them and treated with Contempt, as perfectly

perfectly useless and insignificant; but those who presume to speak in their Favour, or to make use of their Authority, are severely censured, as forgetting their Duty to the Scripture, and derogating from its Authority in Proportion to the Regard they express for any of them, though not in Opposition to the sacred Writings, but in Subordination and in Aid of them.

Such is some Mens Zeal for Scripture, and yet none appear to be less governed by it in the Opinions they choose to be distinguished by. The *Socinians*, in their Method of Controversy, are a flagrant Instance of this; who cannot be thought to have thrown off all Regard to all other Rules and Guides, purely out of Submission and Deference to the Scriptures; but because they knew they were all so many Witnesses against them; and that when the Scriptures stood alone, unsupported by the Evidence, that all Ages of the Church, from the very Beginning, have given to them, 'twas the easier to dispute their Meaning, and to wrest them to their own Sense. The Authority of the Scriptures seems to have been cried up by these Men with no other View, but that by standing alone the Sense of them might the more effectually be undermined. This at least, in fact, has proved the Case, whatever were their Intention.

But, for an Instance, how little Men are sometimes guided by Scripture, who are loudest for a strict Adherence to it, and affect to take it as it were into their peculiar Patronage, as its only Friends, we need go no farther than to the Disputes that have been of late, and are still agitated



tated with so much Heat concerning Church-Authority; which, though it have the Practice of the Universal Church in all Times on its Side, has been opposed with that Assurance on one Hand, and with that professed Regard to the Scriptures on the other, that one would think there could not be found in them the least Foot-steps of any thing in favour of it; much less such express and plain Words as those I have now read to you, *Obey them that have the Rule over you, and submit your selves*: Words which so fully contain the Relation of Superiours and Inferiours, and so strongly command the Submission of one to the other, that did not the Circumstances of the Place shew the contrary, they might well be thought to be meant of the Obedience due to the Civil Powers, a Duty frequently commanded in Scripture, but no where in Terms more significant; for *Οἱ ἡγούμενοι*, either by it self, or, as 'tis put no less than three times in this Chapter, with a Genitive after it, does most properly signify Governours, or those that have the Rule over us. 'Tis indeed in two of the Places rendered in the Margin by *Guide*, and *being Guides*, to express either the Nature of the Rule here meant, or to disclaim more effectually the usurped Powers of the Church of *Rome*, which of Right belong solely to our Civil Governours: But whatever be the Difference between Ecclesiastical and Civil Power, nothing can be inferred to the Diminution of the former from this Term, which is often used by the best Writers to express Governours, and those not of the inferiour Sort, but such in whom the supreme Authority is lodged.

And that it is taken in as large a Sense in Scripture, we have many Instances in the Old Testament; where the Translators have used it to express Rulers of all Kinds, Kings, Princes, Judges, and Captains; as well as Heads of Tribes, Courses, and Houses. And as the Style of the Apocryphal Books is of good Use for the Understanding that of the New Testament, it may not be improper to take Notice, that there also the Word frequently occurs in the Sense of a Governour; and that in *the Wisdom of the Son of Sirach* we have not only ἡγούμενοι λαῶ, but ἡγούμενοι ἐκκλησίας, xxxiii. 18. *Hear me, O ye great men of the people, and hearken ye rulers of the Congregation.* But what is most to our Purpose to observe, is, that the same Word is used by our Saviour himself to his Disciples, *Luke xxii. 26.* where, shewing the Difference he would have between them and Civil Governours, he says, *But ye shall not be so: But he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve.* Καὶ ὁ ἡγούμενος, ὡς ὁ διακονῶν. where the Opposition plainly shews, that ὁ ἡγούμενος is he that rules, and has the chief Authority.

Nothing therefore can be drawn to the Degradation of Church-Power, or Authority, from the Apostle's making use of this Term to express Superiours in the Church rather than any other. But if a Doubt could be made of the Sense of the Word taken by it self, the other Words 'tis joined with, put the Meaning of it here past dispute: *Obey them and submit your selves to them.* To them indeed is not expressed, but is necessarily understood from the former Part of the Sentence,  
*Obey*

*Obey them, and submit your selves :* To whom? No doubt, to them. But to obey and submit our selves to others as Matter of Duty, must be allowed to suppose those others to be our Superiours, and to have a Right to our Obedience. Otherwise the Apostle's Precept would come to this, " I require you to obey those to whom you owe no Obedience, and to submit to those to whom no Submission is due; whom I call indeed your Rulers, though they have no Authority to rule over you; and your Guides, though you are perfectly at Liberty whether you will follow them or not; and have as good a Right to lead them, as to be led by them. The Direction and Authority they claim, is mere Usurpation; without any Foundation in the Word of God, or the Institution of Christ; yet such Rulers, such Guides I require you to obey, and submit your selves to". At this Rate must Men make an inspired Writer talk, if they will not allow Persons to whom Obedience is here required, to be properly Governours, invested with a real Authority from Christ to rule his Church.

For the Word we render *obey*, is very justly so rendered, as appears by the Use of it in several other Places. Thus 'tis used twice together, *Acts v. 36, 37. before those Days rose up Theudas—to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joined themselves: Who was slain, and all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered, and brought to nought, πάλιν ὅσους ἐπακολουθοῦν αὐτῷ. After this Man rose up Judas.——he also perished, and all, even as many as obeyed him, ἐπακολουθοῦν αὐτῷ, were dispersed.*



Will it be said, that ἐπειδούτο in these Places does not properly signify *obeyed*, but suffered themselves to be perswaded by them? Let us hear St. James iii. 3. *Behold, we put bits in the horses mouths*; strong Bits, not persuasive Arguments, but to what End? *That they may obey us.* πρὸς τὸ πείθεσθαι αὐτοὺς ἡμῶν. Nor is any thing more common than this Sense of the Word in other Writers, and still less Room is there, if possible, to dispute the Meaning of the other Word, ὑπαίχετε, which can signify nothing but to submit or yield Obedience to another; but Submission and Obedience on one Side, necessarily suppose Power and Authority on the other. This Text then is a full Declaration of Order and Government in the Church; and 'tis the Right of some, commissioned thereto, to rule, govern and direct; and the Duty of others to be ruled, governed and directed; that is, to pay Obedience and Submission to them; for that these Words relate to Church-Rulers and Guides, and the Submission due to them, is too evident to be denied from the Description given of them in the Words following, *for they watch for your Souls*; which is the proper Character of Pastors, whose immediate Business it is to take Care of the spiritual Welfare of those committed to them. If any who dislike a Term so expressive of Submission as ὑπαίχετε, shall pretend, that because 'tis no where else found in the Scriptures, either of the Old or New Testament, it ought to be suspected to be a Mistake of the Copist, and that probably the true reading is ὑπακούετε; I answer, that though that be not improbable as a Conjecture, yet it has

has no Copy to support it ; and if it had, would do them no Service : Since no Term is so often used in Scripture to express Obedience, as ὑπακούειν ; the Examples are so many as to make it needless to mention any.

But the Point I am now maintaining, the Authority of Church-Governours, depends not on a single Text, as indeed I think no Point of any Consequence can be supposed to do ; it has the whole Tenour and Language of the Scriptures on its Side. All the Words implying Obedience are made use of to express the Duty of the People to their spiritual Governours : πείθεσθαι we have here in the Text ; ὑπακούειν, which St. Paul frequently uses to express Obedience to the Faith, to the Gospel, to the Truth ; is also made use of by him to signify the Obedience due to himself, as a Minister of that Gospel, a Teacher of that Faith and Truth ; thus, *Phil. ii. 12. Wherefore my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, καὶ ὡς πάντοτε ὑπακούετε, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence. And 2 Thess. iii. 14. If any man obey not our Word by this Epistle, ἔχ' ὑπακούει τῷ λόγῳ ἡμῶν, note that man.* Another Word expressing Subjection is ὑποτάττειν ; and this both St. Peter and St. Paul use to express the Subject's Duty to the Civil Magistrate, *Rom. xiii. 1. and 1 Pet. ii. 13.* And the same Apostles have made Choice of the same Word in their Injunctions to the Brethren to obey the Ministers of the Gospel, *1 Cor. xvi. 16. and 1 Pet. v. 5.* There is indeed one other Word to signify Obedience once used by St. Paul, *Tit. iii. 1. and that is πειθαρχεῖν ;* which if it be not applied to the Submission due to Church-Governours, so neither could it in the full Import of it ;

it; it being a compound Word, which not only denotes Obedience, but the Object also to which 'tis due, the Civil Powers; for they are always meant by *ἀρχαὶ* and *ἀρχόντες* in the New Testament, unless when speaking of the invisible Powers of the other World. After Words so fully expressing Obedience, 'tis scarce worth observing to you the Respect the People are supposed to have for those who have this Rule over them; that they are required *ἐν ἡμῖς ἔχειν*, *to have them in Honour* as dear to them, *Phil. ii. 29.* and *ἡγεῖσθαι ὑπὲρ ἐμπειρῶν ἐν ἀγάπῃ*, *to esteem them very highly in Love,* *1 Thess. v. 13.*

And as the Peoples Duty to their Teachers and spiritual Governours is thus signified by a Variety of Terms most expressive of Obedience; so are those to whom this Obedience is due, called by Names that plainly and undeniably carry in them Power and Authority; such as *ἡγούμενοι*, *πρεσβύτεροι*, *πρεσβυτέρους*, *πρεσβυτέρους*, *διδάσκαλοι*, *ποιμένες*, *ἐπίσκοποι*; the three last of which are applied also to our Saviour, and two of them by himself. And when they act in Pursuance of their Office, they are said *διδάσκειν*, *ποιμαίνειν*, *ἐπισκοπεῖν*, *διατάττειν*, *παραγγέλλειν*, Words all implying Authority and Government; but most of them Care and Diligence and Labour also on the Part of those entrusted with it. The Apostles indeed do often, or rather, generally use a Word that does not strictly carry any Power in it, and that is *ῥογήσασθαι*, *to beseech, exhort, or advise.* But this must be considered, as expressing the Greatness of their Modesty, and the Gentleness of their Conduct, not the small Extent of their Authority; which is not the less in it self, or the less effectual



effectual for being exerted in soft and gentle Words. When there was Occasion, they knew how to change their Style, and speak in other Terms; they shew they have a Right, ἐλέγχειν, ἐλέγχειν ἀποτόμως, ἐλέγχειν μὴ πάσης ἐπιταγῆς, νεθελεῖν; ἐμπλήτειν, χρῆσθαι ἀποτόμως, παιδεύειν, ἐπιδιδιορθεῖν, μὴ ἐπιτρέπειν, which last Expression amounts to the most authoritative Prohibition. And St. Paul more than once speaks of the ἐξουσία or Power Christ had given him, of his coming with a Rod, of his designing θαρρῆσαι καὶ παλμῆσαι ἐπὶ πᾶσας, of his having in Readiness ἐκδικῆσαι πᾶσαν ὀργάνην, to revenge every Disobedience. This Language St. Paul uses, not only in support of his own Authority, but in his Instructions to *Timothy* and *Titus*, whom he had set over the Churches of *Ephesus* and *Crete*.

Nay farther, St. Paul expressly asserts to the Church a Power to judge its Members, and reproves the *Corinthians* for not having done it in the Case of the incestuous Person, 1 Cor. v. This indeed is strongly denied by the Opposers of Church-Authority; they tell us nothing here is meant, but what every private Man has a Right to do, nay cannot but do, take Notice of the Behaviour of a disorderly Brother, and judge him to be what he is. But what can be more trifling than such an Explication, or more contrary to St. Paul's Meaning? He tells the *Corinthians*, that when he wrote to them, *not to keep Company with Fornicators*; he did not mean the Fornicators of the World, but those among the Brethren that were so: That this was his Meaning; for that he had nothing to do to judge them that were without the Church; those he leaves to the

the Judgment of God; but for those who were within, it was his and their Business to judge them, and to put away the wicked from among them. (a) *For what have I to do, says he, to judge them also that are without? Do not ye judge them that are within? but them that are without, God judgeth. Therefore, put away from among your selves that wicked person.* 1 Cor. v. 12, 13. By judging, here is evidently meant such an Authoritative Act, as they had no Right to exercise over those who were without the Church; and as for those that were within, it had in the last Resort so real an Effect, as to excommunicate and put out from among them, the Persons who deserved to be so judged. And this was the highest Act of Authority Governours could exert, who had not the Power of the Sword, nor any Share in the Civil Judicature: Their Censures could go no farther, otherwise than as God was pleased to second the just Censures of his Church, and the Prayers with which they were accompanied, with Judgments from himself; which seems indeed ordinarily to have followed in a very visible and sensible manner, upon *delivering an Offender to Satan* in the first Ages. For as to the Expression it self, I see not but that it may properly be pronounced upon any Person deservedly cut off from  
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(a) If this Passage were pointed in the Original, as I cannot but think it should, and, as it appears by *Theophylact*, it was in some Copies, it should be translated thus: *For what? Have I any thing to do to judge them also that are without? No, Judge ye them that are within, them that are without God judgeth, (or will judge, for there are many Authorities for  $\chi\rho\iota\varsigma$ ) and take away the wicked one from among you.*

the Body of Christ; he is no longer under the Guidance of the Holy Spirit, and the instituted Means of Grace, but is delivered over to the *Evil one*, to suffer the Punishment due to his Sins, in such Degree and Manner as God shall think fit.

No body can think any of these Expressions carry the Authority of the Church too high, or that the Apostles claimed either for themselves or those sent by them, greater Powers than belonged to them, who considers either their singular Humility and Piety, or the Commission our Saviour gave them in the Power of the *Keys*, the Power of *binding* and *loosing*, and the Power of *remitting* and *retaining* Sins. The Disputes about the precise Meaning of these Commissions are so many, that I cannot pretend at present so much as to enumerate them. I shall only observe, that the Power of the *Keys*, if we will allow the Scripture to be the best Interpreter of its own Language, cannot but be supposed to imply a very great Commission and Authority: Since in *Isaiah* xxii. 22. we find a Promise from God to make *Eliakim* first Minister under King *Hezekiah*, thus expressed, *I will commit the government into his hand, and he shall be a Father to the house of Judah*; and the Key of the House of David will I lay upon his shoulder: So he shall open and none shall shut, and he shall shut and none shall open. And in Allusion, no doubt, to this Passage, the Power with which Christ upon his Resurrection was invested by the Father, is described under the same Image, *Apoc.* iii. 7. *These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the KEY OF DAVID, he that openeth and no man shutteth, and shut-*



*teth and no man openeth.* And he that hath the *Key of David*, the same, *Apoc. i. 18.* is said to have the *Keys of Hell and Death.*

Now he that sees the Supreme Power of Christ thus expressed by himself, will have Reason to think, no little Degree of Power is meant to be given to the Ministers of Christ, when given to them by himself under the same Figure. But take the Power of the *Keys* in the lowest Sense that can be, it must at least imply an Authority to admit Persons into the Church by Baptism; and in order to that, a Power of judging of their Fitness for it, of giving them Instructions, and declaring the necessary Conditions of it; and to keep out those who are not fit to be admitted; And it seems but a just and necessary Consequence of such a Power, to have Authority to put out of the Church such Persons, when admitted, who ought not to have been admitted, had it been known what they would have proved, or such as renounce the Conditions upon which they came into it.

As to the Power of *binding and loosing*, 'tis made a great Doubt, whether it relate to what is Analogous to *Legislation* or to *Jurisdiction*; I say Analogous, because *Legislation* and *Jurisdiction* are properly Civil Terms. Those who were no Friends to Church-Power themselves, or wrote in Times and Places that did not favour it, have inclined to the first Sense, and think our Saviour in these Words gave the Apostles a Power of (b) retaining

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(b) His Christi verbis iis (Apostolis) commissum est, dirigente Spiritu Sancto, ut de Religione decernerent, quoad usum aut rejectionem rituum & judiciorum Mosaicorum, idque vel in tempus, vel in perpetuum. *Lightf. in locum.*

ing or abolishing such Parts of the Jewish Law, as they should think fit : And this Sense has been greedily embraced by the late Writers against Church-Authority. But besides (c) many other Reasons against this Explication of the Power given to St. Peter, and in him to the rest of the Apostles, *Matt. xvi* the like Passage in *Matt. xviii.* is generally confessed to relate not to Things but Persons ; and that is a very great Presumption it

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(c) *1st*, The *Binding* and *Loosing* used by the Jewish Doctors, which is the whole Ground of this Explication, was a very different thing from what it is here brought to prove. For they did not assume to themselves a Power to dispense with, or to annul any thing that was clearly commanded by any Law of *Moses*, but to explain the Sense of them, and to decide the Questions that should arise *de licitis aut non licitis in lege*, which are *Lightfoot's* own Words, to determine what Persons, at what Times, in what Circumstances, to what Degree, and to what Actions, &c. a Law obliged or did not oblige ; and upon these Points their Doctors often differed, though all agreed in acknowledging the Authority and Force of the Laws. Now this certainly is very different from a Power to abrogate the Laws themselves, the Point here contended for.

*2dly*, Nothing can be more contrary to the whole Conduct of our Saviour, while on Earth, than this Interpretation. He declared on all Occasions, that he came not to *destroy* the Law, but to *fulfil* it. He was very exact in observing himself, and obliging others to observe every the least Command of it ; and there was nothing he avoided with more Care, than to give a Jealousy to the Jews that he had such a Design, as he is supposed to have declared to his Apostles in these Words.

*3dly*, The abrogating of the *Ceremonial* Part of the Jewish Law seems to have been one of the things which the Disciples as yet were not able to bear, *Joh. xvi. 12.* And 'tis plain from several Places in the *Acts*, particularly *xxi. 20.* that they had not the least Apprehension of this being our Saviour's Meaning, neither when he spoke these Words, nor for several Years after his Death.

*4thly*, The Truth is, that at last when the *judicial* and *ceremonial* Parts of the Law were to cease, they rather expired of themselves upon the Destruction of the City and Temple, which was a total Dissolution of the Jewish Polity, than were abrogated by any Authoritative Declaration, or Act of the Apostles. Nothing remained but Synagogue-Worship, which being of human Institution, did not want a divine Commission, either to alter or put an End to it.

does so in the other : And if that will be allowed to be of any Weight, the antient Writers of the Christian Church do not appear to have ever understood it otherwise. And that the Words *binding* and *loosing* are capable of such a Sense in the Mouth of a Jewish Writer, is evident from a very remarkable Passage in (d) *Josephus*, which indeed did not escape the Diligence of Mr. *Selden*, but the Cause he was writing for led him quite besides the true Meaning of it. But what greatly confirms this to be the Meaning of this Power here, as 'tis joined to that of the *Keys*, is, that we have much the same Image, though not just to the same Sence, *Apoc.* xx. 1. where St. *John* says he, *saw an Angel come down from heaven, having the Key of the bottomless Pit, and a great Chain in his Hand.* As a *Key* represents the Power of opening and shutting, so does a *Chain* that of binding and loosing: And he who

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(d) *Josephus*, l. 1. c. 4. de Bell. Jud. speaking of the great Advantage the Pharisees made of the Piety of Queen *Alexandra*, to whom her Husband upon his Death left the Government, says, they insinuated themselves so far into her Favour, and got that Ascendant over her, that they engrossed the whole Government in a manner to themselves, and did what they would; they could banish or recall from Banishment, imprison or set at Liberty whom they would: And their Power did not stop here; for a little lower he says, They could even put whom they would to Death, and no body's Life was safe from their Resentments. His Words are these; Οἱ δὲ τῇ ἀπλότῃσιν τῶν ἀνθρώπων κατὰ μὲν ὑπὸν ἡδὴ καὶ διοικηταὶ τῇ ὅλων ἐμίγνοντο, διώκειν τε καὶ κατὰγειν καὶ ἐδέλοισιν, which might have been properly enough expressed, by ascribing to them the Power of the *Keys*,) ΛΥΕΙΝ τε καὶ ΔΕΙΝ. Καθόλου δ' αἱ μὲν ἀπολαύσεις τῆς βασιλείας, ἐκείνων ἦσαν. Τὰ δὲ ἀναλώματα καὶ αἱ δυχέρειαι τῆς Ἀλεξάνδρας. And a little lower, ἐκράτει δὲ τῇ μὴ ἄλλων αὐτῇ, φαρισαῖοι δ' αὐτῆς. ΔΙΩΚΕΙΝ, &c. Mr. *Selden* following the Latin Version translates thus, *Summovendo & deponendo quos vellent*, intirely mistaking the Sense of the Greek, *solvendo item & ligando*; then adds, *quod de arbitraria eorum legis, juxta jam dicta, interpretatione sumi potest.* Which is so tenderly expressed, as plainly to shew, he was conscious he put a Force upon the Words; and was afraid of a *sumi non potest.*



has Authority to deliver an Offender to Satan to be bound, that is, to be his Prisoner (e) and to be tormented by him, (for it was then the common Practice to put Prisoners into Chains, and give them corporal Punishment, whence Jailers are called Tormenters, *Matt. xviii. 34.*) is properly said to bind that Person; and to loose him when the Sentence is taken off, and the Offender released from the Power of the *Evil one*, and the Chains in which he held him.

As to the Power of *remitting* and *retaining* Sins given to the Apostles, *Joh. xx. 23.* our Adversaries themselves acknowledge it to be a very great one in the obvious Sense of the Words; else they would not be at so much Pains to look out for other Meanings, and contend so warmly as they do, that it was something appropriated to the Apostles. But there is no need for such a Supposition; nothing hinders but that the Power here given to the

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(e) That the evil Spirits were the great Tormenters of Mankind, we have the Testimony of all the antient Church-Writers. *Dæmones, irrepentes etiam corporibus occulte, ut Spiritus tenues, morbos fingunt, terrent mentes, membra distorquent, ut ad cultum sui cogant; ut nidore altarium, vel hostiis pecudum saginati, REMISSIS QUÆ CONSTRINXERANT, curasse videantur.* *Min. Fel.* And *Cyprian de Idol. Van.* has almost the same Words. But 'tis certain the Apostles could bind and torment those who bound and tormented others. And the same Power was for some Ages continued to the Church; as appears from the same Writers: *Hæc tamen adjurati per Deum veram a nobis, statim cedunt, & fatentur, & de obsessis corporibus exire coguntur; videas illos nostra voce & operatione Majestatis occulta, flagris cadi, igne terreri, incremento poenæ propagantis extendi, ejulare, gemere, deprecari. — Et vel exiliunt statim, vel evanescunt gradatim, prout fides patientis adjuvat, aut gratia curantis aspirat,* *Cypr. ibid.* But if the Apostles had Power to bind the evil Spirits in this manner, it is not to be imagined, that they could not as easily deliver up Offenders to be bound by them.

the Apostles, which differs, I think, in nothing but Expression from the former, might be equally given to their remotest Successors, acting in the Name of Christ and within the Rules of their Duty: Only with this Difference, that they were enabled to prove to an unbelieving World, the Validity of the Commission they pretended to, by external and sensible Effects, by the Power they had of Releasing those whom Satan had bound, from their Infirmities; and of Continuing on others the Infirmities they were under, and Inflicting new ones, even Death it self, where the Sin of the Offender, and the Service of the Gospel made it necessary. Which extraordinary Power seems not to have ended with the Apostles, but to have subsisted for some Time together with the other miraculous Gifts, which did not cease, till Things were come to that Maturity, that the Dispensation of the Gospel did no longer want them. But whatever the Words of this Commission precisely mean, as spoken to the Apostles, 'tis easy to see what they do not mean; 'tis easy to see they do not give the Successors of the Apostles, who have not the Gift of discerning the Secrets of Mens Hearts, a Power of *remitting* or *retaining* the Sins of this or that individual Person absolutely. This is a Power no Church, not even that of *Rome*, ever claimed; all Sides have confessed their Absolutions to be valid only conditionally, *clave non errante*; that is, upon a Supposition only of true Repentance: So that the Opposers of absolute Absolutions, oppose a Phantom of their own. When therefore we see Men of Sense combating in earnest what never was maintained, one cannot help

help suspecting, in Compliment to their Understanding, that they have some other Meaning, and fight against the Shadow of what is not maintained, to oppose more effectually what is.

But to proceed, If there be in Scripture so plain a Distinction of Superiours and Inferiours, of the Brethren and those who have the Rule over them, as I have been contending for; those who are resolved to dispute the Ground Inch by Inch, will hope still effectually to puzzle the Cause, by demanding a Specification of the Powers claimed, who are the Persons invested with them, and what degree of Submission and Obedience is due to them. I answer, as to the Persons, they are the ΠΡΕΣΒΥΤΕΡΟΙ, not taken singly, which leads to the wild Scheme of the *Independents*; a Scheme, one would think, invented on Purpose to make Christianity appear ridiculous; but acting together, that is, the ἐπισκοπικόν, 1 Tim. iv. 14. the \* *Confessus Ordinis*, the Ecclesiastical Consistory or Senate with their *Bishop* at their Head, who, with the Presbytery, seems to be the ANGEL of the Church, in the ii. and iii. of the *Apoc.* for Presbyters acting without a *Bishop* to preside over them, is a new Notion, unknown to all Antiquity, from the first Settlement of the Christian Church quite down to the Reformation. These are the ἡγούμενοι, or Rulers, as is plain from Scripture, which knows no such thing as a single, independent Presbyter, but speaks of them always in the ePlural Number. As the Presbyters of *Jerusalem*, Acts xi. xv. xxi. of *Ephesus*, Acts xx. of the Church, James v. Presbyters ordained in every Church, Acts xiv. and in

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every City, *Tit. i.* And the same is meant by the Bishops of *Philippi, Phil. i. 1. (f).*

And as to their Powers, what they are; if this could not be distinctly shewn from Scripture, no more can we know from thence what Powers belong to our Civil Governours; and yet it will be allowed by all, that Obedience to them is commanded in the strongest Terms. The Powers in one Case, though the Scriptures were silent, might in general be deduced from the Nature of their Office and the End of their Institution, as certainly as in the other. And let me add, that it concerns those who are to obey, whether in Spiritual or in Civil Matters, to inform themselves of their Duty, and consequently of the Extent of the Authority of those set over them, lest they bring on themselves the Guilt and Punishment of Disobedience, by refusing, through a culpable Ignorance, either to God or *Cæsar*, what is due to them.

But to give a more direct Answer; the Powers of Church-Governours may, without much Difficulty, be drawn from Scripture, and consequently the Nature and Degree of the Obedience due to them; partly from the Commissions given by our Saviour, partly from the Powers exercised by the Apostles in planting and governing Churches, and the Instructions given to those sent by them; partly

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(f) Agreeably hereto we find in the most valuable Piece of Antiquity, next the Scriptures, *Clement's Epistle to the Corinthians*, §. 47. αἰσχεῖα καὶ λιαν αἰσχεῖα, ----- δι' ἐν ἧ δύο πρόσωπα σασιάζειν πρὸς τοὺς ΠΡΕΣΒΥΤΕΡΟΥΣ. And, §. 54. μόνον τὸ ποιμνιον τοῦ Χριστοῦ εἰρη- νάειν μετὰ τῶν καθεσμενίων ΠΡΕΣΒΥΤΕΡΩΝ. And §. 57. ὑποτάγντε τοῖς ΠΡΕΣΒΥΤΕΡΟΙΣ. To inforce which is the Business of the whole Epistle. And who knows not *Tertullian's* Præfident probati quique SENIORES, *Apol. c. 39.*

ly from the Words denoting the several Acts of the Authority they used ; and partly from those that express the Submission due to them. Whoever considers and compares these together, will not easily ascribe to the Governours of the Church a Power that does not belong to them, or deny any that does.

A second Way of knowing the Powers of Church-Governours, and, I take Leave to say, a very proper and necessary one, is the Practice of the Church in the first and purest Ages of it : For though the Scripture be a perfect Rule of Faith, he must never have looked into it, who is capable of thinking it a perfect Rule of Worship, I mean external Worship, and Discipline. But he that will take in the Writings of the Primitive Church, as a Supplement to Scripture in these Points, cannot be at a Loss to know what are the Powers of Church-Governours, or what the Obedience due to them.

A third way of determining in this Controversy, is to be taken from the Nature of Society ; for as the Church is a Society, whatever is essential to Society, must be so to the Church. To judge fairly of this, we must go back to the Beginnings of the Church, and consider it in its first Formation, and during those Ages in which it subsisted by itself, destitute of all Support and Protection from the Civil Powers. This Way of deducing Church-Power is, I confess, nicer, and requires more Caution than the other two, and should always be considered jointly with them. Otherwise we shall be apt too forwardly to conclude, that the Church in Fact has such or such a Power, because 'tis in our Opinion convenient it should ; and that will

lead us to all the Usurpations of the Papacy : for if Convenience gives a Right, a Plenitude of Power, a Right not only to meddle in Spirituals, but in all others Matters *in ordine ad Spiritualia*, Infallibility and Persecution will soon be thought not only convenient but necessary Claims, and that to the best of Purposes, to preserve Unity and root out Heresy.

If it be objected against this Way of deducing Church-Powers, that the State's becoming Christian has made so great an Alteration in the Church, as to its external Condition, that it cannot justly be inferred, that every thing that was necessary for the Church before, is equally and in the same Degree necessary still ; I answer, That this Objection does not prove that the same Degree of Authority and Power is not still necessary for the well governing of the Church ; but only that it is not necessary that this Power should in every Part of it be still kept in the same Hands. With these Cautions, and under these Reserves, we may very justly argue in behalf of the Church from the Nature of Society.

I know this Way of arguing is violently opposed by the Impugners of Church-Authority, and that from these two Considerations chiefly ; one, that the *Kingdom of Christ* is not of this World ; and the other, that the Church is therefore an *invisible* Society, and that Arguments from a visible Society, will not hold to one that is invisible. But I beg Leave to say, that the first, though it has been made the Corner-Stone of the new Scheme, is in Truth nothing to the Purpose ; and in the second, in a Question about the Power of the Ministry, is a mere Fiction. First I say, that the  
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Kingdom of Christ, which *John* xviii. 36. is said *not to be of this World*, is not the Church, as is most evident from the Context: in which our Saviour is accused to the *Roman* Governour, as setting up to be King of the *Jews* to the Prejudice of *Tiberius*; our Saviour *who came into the World to bear witness to the Truth*, could not but own what was true; but adds, that his Kingdom was such an one as need give the Emperour no Uneasiness; that it was not of this World; and therefore his Servants used no Force to hinder his being delivered to the *Jews*, much less to disturb his Government. This is the Sense of our Saviour's Answer; but what is this to the Church? But it is not in this Place only, that *Kingdom* does not mean the Church; I will add, nor in any other Place of Scripture. The contrary, I am sensible, is grown to be a very common Opinion, but I will venture to affirm it to be without sufficient Grounds. I cannot enter into the particular Proofs of this here. It may be sufficient to observe at present; 1<sup>st</sup>, That if *Church* be put into the Place of *Kingdom*, it will hardly ever make tolerable Sense; and when it seems to do so, the Expression is Elliptical, and the *Gospel* of the Kingdom, or the *Preaching*, or some other like Words, are understood, as any one will see who considers only the xiii. *ch.* of *St. Matthew*; where, to a careful Reader, such Supplementary Words will appear absolutely necessary to make out the Analogy between the Kingdom of Christ, and the many things it is compared with in that Chapter. 2<sup>dly</sup>, If βασιλεία signifies the Church, 'tis the πληθὺς βασιλευμένων, the People governed by Christ; whereas in the

Gospel it means the Regal Dignity and Power of Christ, and the Majesty with which he will come to judge the World ; or the Glory and Happiness attending it, which, in certain Proportions and Degrees, will at the last Day be communicated by him to those who shall be then received into the Heavenly Mansions, as the Reward of their Faith and Love, while Members of his Mystical Body, the Church here on Earth. This is the *Kingdom* ; and the *Church* is the Number of the Faithful, *professing* to live in Expectation of it, and daily *praying* for its *coming*.

And as to that other Pretence, the *Invisibilty* of the Church, 'tis a mere Fiction ; the Church as spoken of in Scripture, is either a particular *visible* Society, or the Collection of them, consider'd as all making one Body. The Church is invisible only by Abstraction, and as such, has no Existence but in the Mind of him that so thinks of it. Nor are the Members of the Church otherwise invisible, than as God alone, who only knows the Hearts of Men, can certainly distinguish between the *sincere Professor* and the *Hypocrite*. The Passage of Scripture, that is with most Colour alledged for the Invisibilty of the Church, is in the v. of *Ephesians*, where Men are commanded to *love their wives as Christ loved the Church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it, and PRESENT it to himself a glorious Church.--that it should be HOLY and WITHOUT BLEMISH*. And because no visible Church has come up to this Character, 'tis concluded, it must be meant of the Church invisible. But they who argue thus, seem not to consider, that the Scripture represents the Church and its Members,

Members, not what they are, but what they should be : from whence the Brethren are constantly called *ἅγιοι*, *Saints*, in Opposition to the rest of the World ; because such they should be, such they promised to be at their Baptism, when they solemnly renounced the World and all its Lusts. But are the Brethren all in fact such ? Or were they ever so ? Even of the Twelve which our Saviour himself chose, had not one of them a Devil ? What Compellations does *St. Paul* give to the Churches he writes to ; particularly to the Church of *Corinth* in those very Epistles, wherein he finds so much Fault with them, and so severely reprove them for the many Disorders they were guilty of ? The visible Churches of *Rome*, *Corinth*, *Ephesus*, *Philipi*, and other Places, did not by any Means come up to the Expressions with which he addresses his Epistles to them ; will it therefore be said he wrote to the invisible Churches of those Places ? The Absurdities of such a Notion will, I dare say, be allowed to be but too visible. But what puts the Sense of this Passage in the *Ephesians* out of doubt, is a parallel Place in the *Colossians*, which deserves the more to be attended to, because these Epistles were written both at the same time, and are so alike, that one is an Epitome as it were of the other ; *Col. i. 21.* the Apostle has these Words, *You that were sometimes alienated----- hath he reconciled in the Body of his Flesh through Death, to PRESENT you HOLY and UNBLAMEABLE, and unproveable in his Sight.* The same Words in the Original, with the Addition of *unproveable*, as in the *Ephesians*. And we may with as good Reason, conclude,



clude, he speaks here to invisible Disciples, as there of an invisible Church. But see what follows, *οἱ ἐμπειροί*, if so be ye continue in the Faith, grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the Hope of the Gospel, which ye have heard; which Words plainly shew, that these Descriptions St. Paul gives of the Church are Representations of what it should be, and what God has done his Part to make it; not Proofs, that it actually is, or ever was so perfect, or indeed can be, unless the Members of the Church on their Part concur and co-operate with the Grace of God, nor any farther than they do so.

The Church therefore is a visible Society, and as such, it necessarily supposes Government and Subordination of some Parts to others, since a Multitude where there is no such Order, deserves any Name rather than that of a Society; much less can it be worthy to be called the *Church of God*, as in Scripture it generally is; for as the Apostle observes, 1 Cor. xiv. 33. *God is not the Author of Confusion*: If it be said, that the Church Catholick is such a Society, where there is no Subordination of the Parts to one another, I answer, that particular Churches are in Nature and Time prior to the Church Catholick; that the true Notion of a Church, as a Society, is to be fetched from them; and that the Church Catholick is nothing but the Aggregate or Complex of particular Churches, all spreading from the same Root, professing the same Faith, and united under the same Head. But if the Church be a Society, and as such, must have Government in it; whatever is necessary to be done to preserve

preserve this Society, and to pursue the true Ends of it, the Governours of it, either by themselves or with the Assistance of the Civil Magistrate, must have a Right to do. And from hence the ordering of the publick Worship, while unsupported by the State, must be in them, and whatever is necessary to the Exercise of Discipline, to keep the Members of the Church to the Duties incumbent on them, as such; and to censure Offenders whether in Faith or Manners; upon whom if they may inflict the last Punishment, Excommunication, all lesser Degrees of Censure must needs be included in the same Power. And when Offenders are justly cut off from the Church, they have Reason to think themselves, while they continue such, cut off also from the Favour of God. Since the Gospel of Christ knows no Salvation out of the Church of Christ.

But the Adversaries we have to do with, will perhaps allow there is somewhere a proper Authority lodged to appoint Rules of Church-Discipline, and to settle a Method of publick Worship; but they will not allow a Power in any to oblige the Members to conform to it; since the Doctrine contained in the Forms of Worship may be false, and the Conscience ought not to be forced, and no one can have a Right to impose Articles of Faith upon another, but all must judge for themselves. The Question then upon this will be, what Authority the Governours of the Church have in Matters of Faith; or since the Scripture is acknowledged to be the Rule of Faith, what Authority they have to interpret Scripture; our Adversaries deny they have any.

Now

Now to resolve this Question rightly, we must again have Recourse to the Beginnings of the Church, and see how this Matter stood then. And here I am willing to own, that the Ministers or Governours of the Church in the first Times, even the Apostles themselves, as to Matters of Faith and Doctrine, had no Authority but that of Witnesses; they delivered nothing but what they declared they received, and in pursuance of their Commission, *Mat. xxviii. 20.* taught what they were commanded; and they were enabled to give such Proofs of their Veracity, as made it fit, that an entire Credit should be given to them; and there was a Necessity it should be so, the Books of the New Testament not being then written, by which their Doctrines could be tried. And as the Apostles received what they taught, so they committed the same Doctrine to others, to be faithfully preserved and taught, and delivered down to those who were to assist or succeed them in the Ministry. Thus *St. Paul to Timothy, 2 Tim. ii. 2. The things that thou hast heard of me among many Witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.* It was from hence the Teachers of the Word derived the Authority they had as such: They proposed nothing to be believed or done as necessary, but what they had received. Nor did the Apostles only and their Successors, and those commissioned by them, ground the Truth of what they taught on this, that it was delivered to them: The Belief and Submission required to what was taught immediately by Christ himself and the Holy Spirit, are required on



on the same Account; that they also taught what they received. Thus our Saviour, *John vii. My Doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me.* And in the *xii<sup>th</sup>* Chapter, *I have not spoken of my self; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a Commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak.* And Chapter the *xiv<sup>th</sup>*, *The word which you hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me.* And in the *xvii<sup>th</sup>* Chapter, addressing himself in Prayer to the Father, he saith, *I have given to them the Words which thou gavest me, and they have received them.* And of the Holy Ghost, he speaks thus, *Chap. xvi. 13. When the Spirit of Truth is come, he will guide you into all Truth; for he shall not speak of himself, but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak.* So that the Doctrine of the Gospel ultimately terminates in God himself, as the sole Author of it; and from thence 'tis so often called *his Word*; and for the same Reason, he that despiseth those sent by Christ, are justly said to despise, not him only, but the Father also. As he says himself to the Seventy, *Luke x. 16. He that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me.*

Now the Doctrine thus delivered down is the *ὑγαίνουσα διδασκαλία*, the *πύθη διδαχῆς*, the *πιστὸς κατὰ διδασκῆν λόγος*, the *ὑποτύπωσις ὑγιαίνοντων λόγων*, the *sound Doctrine*, the *Form of Doctrine*, the *faithful Word*, the *form of sound Words*, Expressions used by St. Paul, not to denote a precise Form of Words, a short Baptismal Creed, as some have imagined; but the Sum and Substance of what it was necessary for them to know and teach, *For the perfecting of the Saints, for the work of the ministry,*  

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*for the edifying of the Body of Christ.* This sacred *Depositum* the Successors of the Apostles in the first Ages were careful to preserve with the greatest Exactness and Fidelity. 'Twas for this *Irenæus* and *Tertullian* recur so often to the Succession of Bishops in the Apostolical Churches; it was to prove the Succession of the Doctrine they taught, in Opposition to the Hereticks they wrote against, whose Doctrines could not in like Manner be traced up to any of the Apostles; and consequently, if contrary to what was so delivered, must be false; and if not false, yet they were novel, and for that reason could not be necessary. And happy had it been for the Christian Church, if its Governours in Matters of Faith could have continued to act only the Part of faithful Witnesses; and the Faith *once delivered to the Saints* had been thus preserved free from all Mixtures or Additions. But this was rather to be wished than hoped; the Nature of things will not permit Doctrines to be long preserved pure and uncorrupt in the way of oral Tradition, which after 'tis carried to some Distance from the Fountain-head, insensibly corrupts in humane Hands, through Weakness rather than Design. And if oral Tradition could have preserved the Faith intire, yet who can say, it would have been sufficient for the Maintenance either of the Peace of the Church, or the Purity of the Faith, to have condemned the Inventions of Hereticks, as dangerous Innovations, without inventing themselves new Tests, as Preservatives against them?

What Tradition could not do, could be supplied only by a written Rule, by the Books that compose

pose the New Testament, which are allowed to have been written by Apostles or Apostolical Men; Men who were either Eye-Witnesses themselves of what they wrote, or conversed with those that were so; Men under the Guidance of the Holy Spirit, which was given to the Church to lead the Teachers of it into all Truth; such were the Writers of those sacred Books, which were received by the Churches of Christ, and acknowledged not only to be true, but to be the Word of God, while the Tradition of the Faith was yet pure and uncorrupt.

But if these be received as the Rule of our Faith, 'tis certain 'tis not the Sound of the Words is so, but the Sense of them. But how is this to be certainly known? And who has a Right to interpret Scripture with that Authority, that his Interpretations ought to be submitted to? When we consider the Divisions there are among those who agree in acknowledging the Scripture for their Rule, this seems to be a very hard Question; and yet upon an impartial View, the Difficulty appears to be more in themselves than in the Nature of the Thing. For first, 'tis only those Parts of Scripture which relate to Matters of Faith, that we want to know the true Sense of in this Question, where 'tis considered as a Rule of Faith. If therefore we are mistaken in the Sense of other Parts, our Faith is nevertheless safe; but these are vastly the greater Number; and the others in Comparison very few. Now of these also 'tis allowed on all Sides, that many are plain and easy to the meanest Understanding: Of the rest, which are more difficult, the Sense of them



either can certainly be determined by the Rules of Construction, the Use of Words, and the Application of those other Helps, by which we are enabled to find out the Sense of other Writings, or it cannot. If it can, from the Time that the Sense of a difficult Place is fully proved and fixed by learned Men, and universally allowed by such, 'tis then no longer to be put into the Number of Places that are difficult, and may with as much Safety and Certainty be argued from, as any other Place of Scripture the most easy: But if the Place be so obscure, and the Words so ambiguous, that the Sense of it cannot be determined with any Certainty; the various Senses 'tis capable of, either are agreeable to other plain Places of Scripture, or not. If they are agreeable to such, there is no Inconvenience in so understanding them; if they are not, nothing as necessary to be believed, ought to be deduced from them: And in either Case, such Passages, strictly speaking, are of no Use to the forming a Summary of Faith in the Judgment of the Reformed Churches at least, who, as they acknowledge the Scriptures for a perfect Rule, so they agree in declaring, that every thing necessary to Salvation is plainly and expressly contained in them, or is very clearly deducible from them. And were the Reformed Churches true to this Principle, there would be little Occasion to dispute about the Right of interpreting.

But if even such difficult Passages must be brought into Controversies of Faith, the Sense of which cannot otherwise be determined, we have a safe way of interpreting them, if we consult the

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Primitive Writers of the Church, and see what Sense they took them in: For though they are not infallible Interpreters, they are no ill Guides; and if the Sense they put on a Place be not the true one, 'tis at least a good one, since they give it in Defence and Explication of the Common Faith, not to support novel and peculiar Tenets of their own: So that we learn from them at least the Faith of the Church, if not the literal Sense of the Place. But this Deference to their Interpretation I claim only with these two Limitations; first, That it is with Respect to some Article of Faith; And secondly, That the Sense of the Place cannot otherwise be fixed: For if it can, could all the Fathers be supposed to agree in a different Sense, it would be of no Weight. And thus much, I presume, will be allowed to the antient Writers of the Church by all, but those who condemn what they have never read, and therefore express so much Contempt, to excuse their Ignorance.

But to return to the Question, Who shall interpret? I answer, not a single Pastor by his mere Authority, but in every Church the Governours of it, assisted by the best Lights they can get, and with a particular Regard to the Sense of the primitive Church where it can be had. These must have a Right to interpret, so far as is necessary to appoint certain Forms of sound Words, for the Admission of Members into the Church, or for the Instruction of Catechumens, or the Direction of Teachers, or for the professing the true Faith in the publick Worship, and the like Cases. But are they obliged to submit to such  
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Summaries or Professions of Faith, who think something to be professed in them that is not true? I answer, that wise and good Governours will bring nothing into them that has not a good Foundation both in Scripture and Antiquity. And that we ought to presume so of our Governours till we know the contrary, and should not without the greatest Modesty and Distrust of our selves, censure their Doctrine as erroneous; much less form a Schism, and dissent in important Points of Faith: For causeless Schisms are heinous Sins, and there are capital Errours in Faith, as well as unpardonable Irregularities in Life; accordingly we see *St. Paul* delivered to Satan not only the incestuous *Corinthian*, but *Hymenaus* and *Alexander* also, whose Crime was that they subverted the Faith by denying the Resurrection, *1 Tim. i. 20.* But if the Case should be so, that the Governours of the Church should either decree false Doctrine, or such as is justly and for good Reasons to be suspected, they then abuse and exceed their Commission; and 'tis commendable and our Duty, or lawful at least, not to conform to them.

But it may happen that the Governours are in the right in what they have appointed; but some of their Flock are strongly persuaded they are not; must they conform against their Persuasion? No. Will their Persuasion justify their Non-conforming? No, nor excuse it neither, unless it be sincere; and no Persuasion is sincere in such a Sense as will excuse a Separation, that is not the Result of a fair and due Examination, and the use of all proper Means. And I think I may  
without



without Breach of Charity suppose, that the Persuasions of the several Sects that dissent from the established Church, are not thus sincere ; though, if I am not greatly mistaken, it has been to excuse or rather justify their groundless Dissentions, that so much Weight has by some Writers been laid upon Sincerity, as if it were not only a necessary Qualification of other Duties, but would be accepted by God in lieu of them.

The Result then of the Case is this ; those who have Authority, or rather whose \* Duty it is to watch over the Faith, and appoint publick Forms, which are always supposed to be agreeable to Scripture, have a Right to interpret Scripture in order to the composing of such Forms ; and if there be not great Reason to think they are mistaken, 'tis the People's Duty to submit to them ; except there be in any an invincible Persuasion to the contrary ; which can hardly ever be the Case

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\* It may perhaps be of Service to observe to such Enemies of Church Power, as are otherwise Friends to Virtue and Religion, how much they are mistaken, when they think it claims to the Ministers of Christ a Power to act *arbitrarily* and at Pleasure, and by their own Authority, in their dispensing the Mysteries of the Gospel, and their Application of Church-Censures, in which View 'tis no Wonder they are no Friends to it : Whereas in Truth every Part of this Notion is pure Mistake. The Ministers of Christ can do nothing, as such, in their own Name, but in his, nor at their own Pleasure, but as he has willed and commanded they should do ; so that every Act of *Power* in them is really an Act of *Duty* : And they are either wanting in their Duty or offend against it, whenever they do not on proper Occasions execute the Powers committed to them, or act in the Execution of them otherwise than their Commission directs they should. They who will fairly consider Church-Power in this View, which is the only true one, will see how widely it differs from *Civil* Power, and will find nothing in it that can justly give Offence.

Case where Governours keep within their proper Bounds. For if what they teach or decree, be true, it cannot be very difficult to prove it so to such as shall in their Doubts apply to them for Satisfaction; for what is of such a Nature, as cannot be proved to be true to a reasonable Man, no Body, I believe, will say, ought to be enjoined.

This I say as to Matters of Faith, about which there are the most Scruples, and where 'tis confessed Governours are strictly obliged to adhere to Scripture. As to Matters of external Worship and Discipline, there, as I intimated before, Governours have a greater Latitude. A divine Revelation is not necessary for the Appointment of all the Parts of them. 'Tis plain *St. Paul* himself in some of the Directions he gives, grounds them not upon any Command of the Lord, but upon the Custom of the Church; *1 Cor. xi. 16. But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the Churches of God.* And 'tis demonstrable the Scripture is not a perfect Rule in these Cases from the same Chapter, which the Apostle concludes with these Words, *The rest will I set in order when I come, τὰ λοιπὰ διατάξομαι.* Some things therefore wanted to be set in order, about which there are no written Directions. So again, *Tit. i. 5. For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting.* In these Points therefore Governours are at Liberty to do what they judge most expedient, and most for Edification, in virtue of that known Rule, which is not so much an Apostolical Precept, as the Dictate of common

common Sense; *let all things be done decently and in order.* Thus I have shewn at large, that the Church, as well as other Societies, has its Governours, that as such they have certain Powers belonging to them, and that their Flocks are bound to obey and submit to them, so long as they pursue the Ends of their Commission.

If I have passed over two Popular Objections made to Church Power by its Enemies, as if it encroached upon the Authority of the Magistrate, and the Liberty of the People, 'tis not that I have forgot them, but because I cannot but slight them, as very trifling; since all that is urged on these Heads is Harangue, not Argument, and is an Appeal not to the Sense of Men, but to their Passions. As Church Governours are never called in Scripture *ἀρχαί* or *ἐξουσίαι*, nor are said *κυριεύειν* or *ἐξουσιάζειν*, but are expressly forbid to do so by our Saviour; so 'tis well known, no sound Part of the Christian Church, and in particular not the Church of England, ever claimed any Part of Temporal or Civil Power, as of divine Right, or by any other Title than the Favour of wise and religious Princes and States. They call themselves *Ministers* not *Magistrates*, and their Rule *Canons*, not *Laws*; they claim not *Dominion* but *Direction*, *Spiritual Discipline* not *Coercive Jurisdiction*. They decline in common Language to speak even of Christ as *King*, that they might give no Umbrage to the Rulers of this World, as if they acknowledged no other: They preach him as *Lord*, and themselves *Servants* for his Sake. And as for the Liberty of the People, Christ neither gave any, nor took any away, he left all Men in the State he found them, except as to a Liberty from Sin;



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(for that other from the Yoke of the Law, concerns *Jews* only;) but he expected those who would be his Disciples, should obey his Commands, and consequently those Persons, by whom they were to be made known to them, who were to teach and instruct them in Righteousness. And what Liberty is taken away by the Ministers of the Gospel acting thus, I am at a Loss to see.

There are indeed Times and Places, in which Spiritual Power exceeds its Bounds; and the Rights both of Prince and People are invaded: but sure there never was less Occasion for such Complaints, than in this Age and in this Nation; where the Christian Laity as such, have all the Liberty the most licentious can desire, a great deal more than is consistent with good Discipline. What then can be the Meaning of those loud Harangues in behalf of the Ecclesiastical Liberty of the People, when no body is touching it? Is it not the same as of the like Harangues in Vindication of their Civil Liberties, under a mild and just and gentle Government? But whatever they mean, all their Efforts will, I doubt not, be in vain: The Goodness of the Constitution, through the divine Blessing, will still support it: 'Tis secure in the Affections of the People, who love the Church too well, not to be jealous of those who would flatter them into a Dislike of it: 'Tis safe in the Protection of good Laws, and in the Justice and Wisdom of a PRINCE, who has very lately declared, *he has its honour and security near at heart.* And under the KING, we have the Happiness to have at the Head of the Church a PRIMATE, who governs in *the Meekness of Wisdom*, and can be zealous for the Truth without breathing Persecution; who  
can



can distinguish between a charitable Indulgence, and an indolent Indifference; between conniving at the Mistakes of virtuous and learned Men, who when they err, err in Sincerity, and write with Modesty; and setting the Doors ~~wide open to the bold Insults of Libertines and Atheists,~~ and the no less pernicious ones of ignorant Enthusiasts, and such Deceivers who shelter themselves under their Cover. In a Word, who knows a just Authority may be maintained without pretending to Infallibility; that our Establishment, though imperfect as 'tis human, may and ought to be defended as a very good one; and as to any Defects in it, that some Things may be altered without giving up every Thing, and the Constitution mended without subverting it. That this Church may for ever be established in Purity and Peace, and triumph over all its Enemies in the Wisdom, Piety and Charity of its Spiritual and Civil Governours, and in the willing Obedience of its Members, grounded in the true Faith, and zealous of good Works,

*God of his infinite Mercy grant through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom with the Father and the Holy Spirit be all Honour, Glory and Power, now and ever.*

# Postscript.

**I** Was apprehensive the Publication of this Sermon might give the Lord Bishop of *Bangor* some little Trouble, and for that Reason, among others, was against it, as thinking it a mean and ungenerous Part to add to the Number of his Adversaries, when he had already so many upon his Hands; especially at a Time when I had good Reason to believe his Lordship's Thoughts were wholly taken up with Business of another Nature, I mean the *Primary Visitation* of his Diocess, whither I concluded he was gone or going soon, tho' I find since, I was mistaken. But little did I think, that a hasty Sermon, begun and ended in two Days, upon a Subject not chosen, but thrown in my Way by pure Accident, could have disturbed his Lordship's Thoughts for seven Months, and drawn upon me so great a Degree of his Displeasure: he will not allow me to plead *hasty* and *careless*, because some *Insertions* and *Additions* were made after-

afterwards; but I assure his Lordship they were none  
 of them After-Thoughts, but purely for Brevity sake  
 omitted in the Preaching; and as for the Note at the  
 End of the Third Edition, it being of a different Na-  
 ture from the rest, I omitted it in the first, could  
 not insert it in the second, the Press having been kept  
 standing; and it was the Printer's Fault it was not  
 placed where it stands now, P. 39. in the Third; But,  
 I say not this to claim the Benefit which the Plea of  
 a *hasty* and *careless* Discourse would give me; I review-  
 ed what I had writ before I preached it, and acknow-  
 ledge every thing in it to be *wilful* and *deliberate*,  
 and hope to shew, I have in no Part of it given just  
 Occasion for so severe a Censure as his Lordship has  
 passed on it, P. 148, where he tells me, "That no-  
 thing could have brought my Reputation, as a  
 Learned Man, into *Doubt*, but such a *Sermon*; and  
 "prophecies nothing will ever put it out of *Doubt*,  
 "but my turning to some other Subject." Surely his  
 Lordship was mightily out of Humour when he writ  
 this. I know no great Pretences I have made to  
 Learning; but whatever Reputation I have of that  
 Sort, I am content it should stand and fall with this  
 Sermon; and I shall not, to save or recover it, be  
 perswaded to turn to another Subject; if I can be of any  
 Use to defend the Church, of which I have the Hap-  
 piness to be a Member, in its just Claims against the  
 Injuries of those who ought to be its Friends.  
 His Lordship's Skill in *Prophecy* I dispute not, but am  
 ready to allow, he knows as much of Things to come,  
 as of those that are past; and will be so just to him,  
 how much soever my *Sermon* may have alter'd his  
 Opinion of my Learning, as to own, his *Answer* has  
 not in the least abated my Opinion of his. There is  
 indeed an unusual Shew of Learning in it, but what-  
 ever is advanced against me of that Kind, is either  
 not true, or not to the Purpose, as I promise to shew  
 when I see a proper Time for it; not with any Hopes  
 of convincing his Lordship, for I have a Demonstra-  
 tion



tion by me, which proves that to be impossible, but to undeceive such Readers as are apt to be carried away with the first Appearances. In the Argumentative Part his Lordship's *Logick*, if he be sincere, is no better than his Skill in *Critick*, and his Reasoning is generally either very weak or very unfair. Take one Instance for a Taste.

I have said in my Sermon, P. 29, "That a third Way of Determining in this Controversy (concerning Church Power) is to be taken from the Nature of Society, but that this Way is nicer and requires more Caution than the other two, (*Scripture*, and the Practice of the Church in the first and purest Ages of it,) and should always be considered jointly with them:" By which I meant to preclude Church-Governours from claiming by this Argument any Powers *inconsistent* with the other two. What now does his Lordship's Candour say to this? Why, "He professes he can make nothing of it but this, That there is a *Third* way of deducing Church-Power, which is *No Way* at all; nor ever to be made use of: That is, You must deduce it from the Nature of Society: Only you must take Care not to deduce any thing relating to it, from the Nature of Society, but what the *Scripture* and the *First Writings* declare to belong to it. This is the *Third* way, viz. The *Two* first over again." Thus his Lordship, as if every thing were *inconsistent* with Scripture and the Primitive Church, that is not expressly declared in one, or was not actually *practised* by the other. Whether this should be placed to a Want of Sincerity, or of something else, I shall not determine; but the Reader has in this a true Sample of his Lordship's Reasoning.

But his Lordship's chief Strength consists in *personal Reflections*, which are made up of *Complaint* and *Invective*. *Complaining* is become so habitual to his Lordship, that he falls into it as well when there is not, as when there is Occasion for it; he fancies, I say things

things purely for the Pleasure of the Sting in the Close of them, P. 77. and that he is the Person they are all pointed at; whereas I can assure his Lordship, one of the greatest Difficulties I had was not to bring Stings in, but to keep them out, his Lordship and his Friends have furnished so much Matter for them; and that those he resents most, are not in the least meant of him: Of this we have a notable Instance, P. 147. I had said, P. 41, "Thus much, I presume, will be allowed to the antient Writers of the Church by all, but those who condemn what they never read, and therefore express so much Contempt to excuse their Ignorance." At whom this Satyr is particularly directed, his Lordship owns, he cannot *positively* say, and yet will take it to himself, and declaims upon it for a Page together, complaining of me as a Man of a most unhappy Temper. Now in answer, I say first, that it is a very just Reflection, and I will add, a very seasonable one; next, I do *positively* affirm, that he was not the Person then in my Thoughts. What Opinion the extreme Sensibility and Tenderneſs his Lordship has shown on this Occasion, will raise in his Readers, I leave him to judge. And I can as truly affirm the same of what I have said, P. 46. of *Harangues in Vindication of the Peoples CIVIL Liberties*, which his Lordship will have to be meant of his *political* Writings: but I declare I had no View to them, but to the seditious Pamphlets of pretended Patriots, who are perpetually infusing into the People groundless Jealousies against the best and mildest Government, to serve themselves.

To *Complaint* his Lordship joins plenty of *Invective*, and endeavours to render me as odious as possible to *Churchmen* on one Hand, and to the *Dissenters* on the other, as a false Friend to the first, and as a bitter Enemy to the last; but to my Comfort, his Accusations are as weak as his Arguments. His first Reproach is as easily denied as 'tis affirmed; but I shall not stop there; the best Proof of my Affection to the Church will



will be to destroy his Lordship's Arguments against it. But how his Lordship came to think it necessary to misrepresent me to the Dissenters also, I can't imagine, against whom *he charges me with saying more than was ever yet said of the whole Body of them by the bitterest Enemies they ever had.* This is followed with some Pages of Satyr and Ridicule, in which his Lordship has exerted himself with the utmost Vigour, that he might not seem to betray a Cause which stood in no need of his Defence. To return his Lordship his *Bear-skin*, and that I may appear to the Dissenters what I really am as to this Cause, I declare to him and them, that I have no ill Will to the Person of any one of them, of whatever *Species* or Denomination; that I rejoyce in the Indulgence granted to tender Consciences, and am against *Persecution*, but do not indeed include in my Notion of it *negative Discouragements*, in which I have all the Writers of the Primitive Church on my Side; the Causes of their Separation I think unreasonable and unjustifiable, and so have thought the Men of the best Learning and Judgment, not of our own only, but of all other Protestant Churches, and that all who can conform to the Church ought to do so; but am willing to believe they, most of them, act according to their present Persuasion, and hope both God and Man will make great Allowances to this in such as are illiterate and uneducated, *quæ major semper credentium pars est*; but as such People are easily practised upon by false Teachers, and great Mischiefs have from thence arisen both to Church and State, the Government has, I think, a Right to make such Laws as are necessary to keep turbulent Spirits quiet, and to preserve our *Religious* as well as *Civil* Establishment; but should wish such Laws might always lie *dormant*, and that no Person, Protestant or Papist, might feel more of them, than if they were never made.

Thus I have made his Lordship my Confessor, and given him my Thoughts of Persecution, and of his Friends the Nonconformists. If his Lordship thinks  
that



that the main Body of each sort of them, *Presbyterians, Independants, Quakers, Anabaptists, &c.* sincere in any other Sense, so as to have used the best Means of Information they could get, let him declare this in express Terms, or let him acknowledge the Injustice of representing me as *Unchristian* and uncharitable to tender Consciences, beyond the bitterest Enemies the Dissenters ever had, for thinking of them no otherwise then he does himself. For my own Part, I would be willing to put the Proof of their *Sincerity* upon a very short Issue; take the Persons assembled in any one *Meeting-house*, and enquire how many of them have ever seriously looked into the *Common-Prayer*, to see whether or no they could conform to the Use of it. I name this as one of the easiest Trials that can be made, to judge whether they have in any Degree examined, into what it is they dissent from. The *Common-Prayer*, take out the Portions of Scripture, is a very short Book, and no Body can say he has not Time to read it, or to have it read to him.

I can bear his Lordship's treating me as a *Fool*, 'tis familiar to him to treat all as such, who have the Misfortune to differ from him; but this *Calumny*, and the representing me as a *Knave*, which he frequently does, he must excuse me, if I will not bear. His Lordship may perhaps expect, I should in Justice to him, take Notice of the Compliments he sometimes makes me of *uncommon* Learning, &c. which I think are intended only to give the keener Edge to his Satyr; but whatever the meaning of them be, as I have no Right to one, so I greatly despise the other, and am willing they should be set against and extinguish each other, and so all pass for nothing; which is the only way to make these Parts of his Lordship's *Answer* of a Piece with the rest of his Performance; of which and his other Writings in this Controversy, it must be allowed his Lordship judges very truly; when he says they are *faint Resemblances* of Mr. *Chillingworth's*

worth's, P. 243. for Envy it self must own, his Lordship has some Likeness to that great Man, just such a one as Mr. Toland has to Mr. Locke, who in *Christianity not Mystrious* makes great Use of Mr. Locke's Principles to support Notions he never dreamed of.

My Printer acquainting me this Afternoon, that he was printing again my Sermon, I was willing to take the Opportunity it gives me, to wash my Hands, of *personal* Matters once for all, to clear my Way to the future Examination of what pretends to Learning and Argument; which shall be publish'd in due time, that I may not incur his Lordship's farther Displeasure by my *Silence*, which, I fear, he would be apt to impute either to a weak Cause, or to ill Manners.

Jan. 22, 1719-20.



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